

10th grade literary terms

Term	Definition	Example/Reference
<b>alliteration</b>	Repeating a consonant sound in close proximity to others	For instance, the phrase "buckets of big blue berries" alliterates with the consonant "b." Coleridge describes the sacred river Alph in <i>Kubla Khan</i> as "Five miles meandering with a mazy motion," which alliterates with the consonant "m."
<b>analogy</b>	A comparison of two things made to explain something unfamiliar through its similarities to something familiar, or to prove one point based on the acceptedness of another. Similes and metaphors are types of analogies.	Analogies often take the form of an extended simile, as in William Blake's aphorism: "As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys."
<b>apologue</b>	A moral fable, usually featuring personified animals or inanimate objects which act like people to allow the author to comment on the human condition. Often, the apologue highlights the irrationality of mankind.	The beast fable, and the fables of Aesop are examples. Some critics have called Samuel Johnson's <i>Rasselas</i> an apologue rather than a novel because it is more concerned with moral philosophy than with character or plot. Examples: George Orwell, <i>Animal Farm</i> Rudyard Kipling, <i>The Jungle Book</i>
<b>aside</b>	An aside is a short speech made by a character in a play--it is heard only by the audience; the rest of the characters cannot hear it. In many instances an aside is a way for a playwright to voice his or her character's thoughts and feelings.	In many sitcoms there is often a character who likes to turn to the audience and make quick remarks; the other kids act like they don't hear him or notice his interruptions.
<b>autobiography</b>	A connected narrative in which an individual tells his or her life story.	Examples include Benjamin Franklin's <i>Autobiography</i> and Henry Adams's <i>The Education of Henry Adams</i> .
<b>ballad</b>	A short poem that tells a simple story and has a repeated refrain. Ballads were originally intended to be sung. Early ballads, known as folk ballads, were passed down through generations, so their authors are often unknown. Later ballads composed by known authors are called literary ballads.	An example of an anonymous folk ballad is "Edward," which dates from the Middle Ages. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and John Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci" are examples of literary ballads.
<b>cliché</b>	An idea or expression that has become tired and trite from overuse, its freshness and clarity having worn off. Clichés often anesthetize readers, and are usually a sign of weak writing.	Example: as busy as a bee; it isn't over 'til the fat lady sings

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<b>comedy</b>	One of two major types of drama, the other being tragedy. Its aim is to amuse, and it typically ends happily. Comedy assumes many forms, such as farce and burlesque, and uses a variety of techniques, from parody to satire. Note: comedy is not always funny or intended to cause laughter.	Examples of comedies range from the plays of Aristophanes, Terrence, and Plautus, Dante Alighieri's <i>The Divine Comedy</i> , Francois Rabelais's <i>Pantagruel</i> and <i>Gargantua</i> , and some of Geoffrey Chaucer's tales and William Shakespeare's plays to Noel Coward's play <i>Private Lives</i> and James Thurber's short story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty."
<b>dialect</b>	A type of informational diction. Dialects are spoken by definable groups of people from a particular geographic region, economic group, or social class. Writers use dialect to contrast and express differences in educational, class, social, and regional backgrounds of their characters"	The diction used by characters in Twain's <i>Huck Finn</i> or Zora Neale Hurston's <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> .
<b>dialogue</b>	In its widest sense, dialogue is simply conversation between people in a literary work; in its most restricted sense, it refers specifically to the speech of characters in a drama.	<i>see definition</i>
<b>diction</b>	The author's choice of words. Since words have specific meanings, and since one's choice of words can affect feelings, a writer's choice of words can have great impact in a literary work. The writer, therefore, must choose his words carefully.	Discussing his novel <i>A Farewell to Arms</i> during an interview, Ernest Hemingway stated that he had to rewrite the ending thirty-nine times. When asked what the most difficult thing about finishing the novel was, Hemingway answered, "Getting the words right."
<b>end-stopped line</b>	A line of verse that ends with a grammatical break such as end punctuation, a colon, a semi-colon, or a comma.	A thing of beauty is a joy forever. -- John Keats' "Endymion"
<b>euphemism</b>	A mild word or phrase which substitutes for another which would be undesirable because it is too direct, unpleasant, or offensive.	Saying "passed away" for "dying" or saying "time-honored" for "old"
<b>hyperbole</b>	In literary criticism, deliberate exaggeration used to achieve an effect. Exaggeration that is not expected to be believed or taken literally.	In William Shakespeare's <i>Macbeth</i> , Lady Macbeth hyperbolizes when she says, "All the perfumes of Arabia could not sweeten this little hand."
<b>idioms</b>	A word construction or verbal expression closely associated with a given language.	For example, in colloquial English the construction "how come" can be used instead of "why" to introduce a question. Similarly, "a piece of cake" is sometimes used to describe a task that is easily done.

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<b>internal rhyme</b>	Rhyme that occurs within a single line of verse.	An example is in the opening line of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven": "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary." Here, "dreary" and "weary" make an internal rhyme.
<b>onomatopoeia</b>	When the sound of a word imitates the sound it represents. The purpose of these words is to make a passage more effective for the reader or listener.	Examples: "Mildred rose and began to move about the room: Bang!, Smash! Wallop, bing, bong, boom." [ <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> by Ray Bradbury] "Bing, gung, splat--the splat being the drawer flying out." ["A. & P." by John Updike]
<b>palindrome</b>	A word, phrase or line of verse that reads the same forwards or backwards	Madam, I'm Adam.
<b>parataxis</b>	The use of clauses (one right after the other) but without conjunctions	Caesar's "I came, I saw, I conquered."
<b>point of view</b>	The narrative perspective from which a literary work is presented to the reader. There are four traditional points of view: third person omniscient, third person, and first person. Much less common than omniscient, third person, and first person is the "second person" point of view, wherein the author tells the story as if it is happening to the reader. Second person sometimes is used to refer to a narrator who is a secondary character, such as Dr. Watson in the Sherlock Holmes stories.	James Thurber employs the omniscient point of view in his short story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." Ernest Hemingway's "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" is a short story told from the third person point of view. Mark Twain's novel <i>Huck Finn</i> is presented from the first person viewpoint. Jay McInerney's <i>Bright Lights, Big City</i> is an example of a novel which uses the second person point of view.
<b>rhyme</b>	When used as a noun in literary criticism, this term generally refers to a poem in which words sound identical or very similar and appear in parallel positions in two or more lines.	In a masculine rhyme, the rhyming sound falls in a single accented syllable, as with "heat" and "eat." Feminine rhyme is a rhyme of two syllables, one stressed and one unstressed, as with "merry" and "tarry." Triple rhyme matches the sound of the accented syllable and the two unaccented syllables that follow: "narrative" and "declarative."

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<b>satire</b>	A piece of literature designed to ridicule the subject of the work. While satire can be funny, its aim is not to amuse, but to arouse contempt. The satirist aims to reduce the practices attacked by laughing scornfully at them--and being witty enough to allow the reader to laugh, also.	Jonathan swift's "Gulliver's Travels" satirizes the English people, making them seem dwarfish in their ability to deal with large thoughts, issues, or deeds. A literary mode based on criticism of people and society through ridicule.
<b>stereotype</b>	An author's method of treating a character so that the character is immediately identified with a group. A character may be associated with a group through accent, food choices, style of dress, or any readily identifiable group characteristic.	Examples are the rugged cowboy, the bearded psychiatrist, and the scarred villain, the corrupt politician, the Black gambler in a zoot suit, and the voice on the phone in a Middle Eastern accent associated with a bomb threat. A well-known tobacco company uses the stereotype of the rugged cowboy in its cigarette ads.
<b>symbolism</b>	A device in literature where an object represents an idea.	<p>In William Blake's "The Lamb," the speaker tells the lamb that the force that made him or her is also called a lamb:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">             Little lamb, who made thee?              Little lamb, who made thee?              Little lamb, I'll tell thee,              Little lamb, I'll tell thee!              He is called by thy name,              For he calls himself a lamb;           </p> <p>The symbol of the lamb in the above lines corresponds to the symbolism of the lamb in Christianity wherein Christ is referred to as The Lamb of God.</p>
<b>syntax</b>	The ordering of words into meaningful verbal patterns such as phrases, clauses, and sentences. Poets often manipulate syntax, changing conventional word order, to place certain emphasis on particular words.	Emily Dickinson, for instance, writes about being surprised by a snake in her poem "A narrow Fellow in the Grass," and includes this line: "His notice sudden is." In addition to the alliterative hissing s-sounds here, Dickinson also effectively manipulates the line's syntax so that the verb "is" appears unexpectedly at the end, making the snake's hissing presence all the more "sudden."